

Frequently Asked Questions

The answers to these questions reflect the most recent operator certification requirements for Other-than-Municipal (OTM) and Non-Transient, Non-Community (NTNC) water systems.

1. When must I have a certified operator managing my system?

Beginning March 1, 2005, all OTM and NTNC water systems were required to have a certified operator managing their system. Systems may choose to have their own certified operator or contract with a certified operator. The following website lists businesses that provide such services

<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/water/dwg/opcert/opcertlist.pdf>

2. What happens if I do not have a certified operator after March 1, 2005?

If an OTM or NTNC water system does not have a certified operator or does not contract with a business that provides certified operator services, the Department will begin enforcement action.

3. What do I do if I lose my certified operator?

The owner of an OTM or NTNC water system must notify the Department of changes in the certified operator or operator-in-charge of the system. A system that loses an operator should immediately hire another certified operator or contract with a certified operator (see FAQ #1) or the Department will begin enforcement action. For this reason it is advisable for all systems to have more than one certified operator.

4. What if my certified operator does not renew his or her certification?

If a system's certified operator fails to renew his or her certification prior to the expiration date printed on the certificate, the system is out of compliance with the drinking water regulations and the Department will begin enforcement action. It is important for system owners to be aware of their certified operator's certification renewal date, and continuing education credits, and assure that the operator renews his or her certification promptly. It is advisable for all systems to have more than one certified operator.

5. What continuing education training courses are being offered currently?

The Department of Natural Resources has a contract for continuing education training courses with the Wisconsin Rural Water Association (WRWA). The training courses offered under this contract will address regulatory topics. WRWA will notify systems of upcoming training sessions. You may also review the list of courses that WRWA offers at their web site: <http://www.wrwa.org/workshops.html>. The WRWA small system courses are the only acceptable continuing education courses for training taken after June 2005.

6. What if an operator has continuing education credits from June 2005 or earlier?

Prior to July 2005, when the Wisconsin Rural Water Association contract for continuing education training courses went into effect, most training credits related to your work (other than health and safety-related) will be accepted. Health and safety-related courses and the initial training prior to the exam cannot be used for continuing education credits. Continuing education credits earned in June 2005 and earlier may include training from a variety of providers in a number of different ways, such as: attending professional organization meetings (e.g. CLEAR, Wisconsin Rural Water Association, Wisconsin Water Association), water supply related courses, EPA and DNR sponsored training courses, in-house and self-study courses, and courses offered by technical colleges or universities.

7. What else do I need to know about Continuing Education Training courses?

Please remember to ask for (if it isn't offered) a slip of paper indicating you took the continuing education training course, the number of credits you received and the date(s) you attended. Keep these continuing education credit slips in a safe place because they are your proof of having earned six continuing education credits during your three year certification renewal period. These slips must be submitted to the Department when your operator certification is up for renewal. The Department will mail you a training reminder letter six months prior to your certification end date and a renewal reminder letter six to eight weeks prior to your certification end date (printed on your certificate).

8. When are certification exams offered?

Exams for OTM and NTNC water systems are offered twice each year in May and November, typically on the first Wednesday of the month. A completed exam application and the \$25.00 exam fee must be submitted to the Department 28 days prior to the exam. The exam schedule and exam application is available on the Department's web site at: <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/es/science/opcert/exam.htm>

9. Are there resources available to help me prepare for the exam?

Yes! The *Small Water System Operator Certification Manual* was specifically designed to meet the needs of OTM and NTNC operators seeking certification. This manual can be downloaded from our web site at <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/water/dwg/OpCert/OpCertIndex.htm>. This web site also has an On-Line Training Course. If you would like to be mailed a copy of the *Water System Operator Certification Manual* bound in a three ring binder, please contact Phillip Spranger at (608) 266-5240 or by e-mail at Phillip.Spranger@dnr.state.wi.us.

10. Is there an exam preparation course available?

If you learn better with hands-on instruction in a classroom environment, Wisconsin Rural Water Association schedules several exam review courses several months prior to the May and November exam sessions. Check the Wisconsin Rural Water Association web site for a training schedule: <http://www.wrwa.org/workshops.html>.

11. Is there a fee to take the Small Water System Operator Certification exam?

Yes. The fee is \$25. Include payment with the completed application.

12. How do I renew my certification?

Your certification must be renewed every 3 years. The Department's Operator Certification program will mail you a training reminder letter six months prior to your certification end date and a renewal reminder letter six weeks before your certification end date (printed on your certificate). Return the renewal reminder letter, proof of 6 hours of continuing education credits and the renewal fee of \$45 to Department of Natural Resources, Operator Certification, P O Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707-7921.

13. What if I miss the renewal deadline?

You may still renew your certification within one year of your certificate renewal end date by submitting your renewal reminder letter, proof of 6 hours of continuing education credits, the renewal fee of \$45, PLUS a \$25 late fee. It is important to realize though, that if you do not renew your certification on time, the system you work for may be issued a violation for operating without a certified operator. If the system has a back-up certified operator, enforcement action against the system will not be started. However, if you are the only certified operator for a water system, the day your certification expires that system will no longer have a certified operator and the Department will begin enforcement action.

▪ **Other important information**

▪ Mary Wagner is the Operator Certification Coordinator in the DNR's Bureau of Integrated Science Services. Mary is responsible for organizing certification examinations, facilitating certification renewals, and approving and tracking continuing education for drinking water and wastewater operators. Mary's phone number is (608) 266-0498 and her e-mail address is Mary.Wagner@dnr.state.wi.us.

▪ Phillip Spranger is the Drinking Water Operator Certification Coordinator in the DNR's Bureau of Drinking and Groundwater. Phillip is responsible for coordinating training and technical assistance for municipal waterworks and small water systems. Phillip's phone number is (608) 266-5240 and his e-mail address is Phillip.Spranger@dnr.state.wi.us.

▪ **Who should you contact with questions?**

Both Mary Wagner and Phillip Spranger can help to answer your questions regarding examinations, renewals, continuing education credits, etc.

▪ **Additional questions?**

Please visit our website at <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/water/dwg/OpCert/OpCertIndex.htm>. Here you will find more information about the Operator Certification Program, links to businesses that provide certified operator services and links to related organizations.